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PUBLIC MEETINGS INPUT

A major factor contributing to the ultimate success of the San Luis Rey River Park is the incorporation of the community input into the Master Plan. Incorporation of community input leads naturally to support for the park, and to community ownership/ use of the park. Four public meetings were held at the Bonsall School and Community Center, where each step of the planning process was presented and discussed with community members. The following issues continued to arise throughout the planning process:

Expansion of SR-76

The community is very interested in the expansion of SR-76 and its coordination with the development of the SLR River Park, and specifically, how traffic will be affected by park development. While people initially had concerns that the park may inhibit the expansion of SR-76, those concerns were dispelled once it was explained that the County is working in full coordination with Caltrans. The intention is to keep abreast of the status of each project so that all potential opportunities are capitalized upon. The Planning Team specifically distributed park programming at both ends and of the CSA as well as in the middle in order to minimize park-related traffic.

Rural Character

The Bonsall and Fallbrook communities highly value the rural character of the area and want to ensure that it is preserved within the River Park. In establishing design guidelines, park programming and distribution, and trail locations, the Planning Team made great efforts to preserve and capture the rural flavor of the area, while providing much needed recreational amenities and access to the river's diverse biologic and non-sensitive cultural resources.

Multi-use Trails

While there were differing opinions on the optimal width of the trails and viability of multi-use trails, the majority of people wanted non-paved trails. Per the County Trails Master Plan, the primary trails throughout the River park will be multi-use (shared by equestrians, hikers, and bikers). These multi-use trails will be a minimum of 3'-4' and a maximum of 8' in width, depending on proximity to sensitive resources, with a crushed stone or similar base (not paved). A paved bike path is proposed as part of the SR-76 improvement project.

Active Recreation

There were divergent views on the demand for active recreation within surrounding communities. Discussions with sports leagues for both children and adults, the Active Recreation Focus Group, and a survey of existing public active recreation facilities indicated a severe deficit of sports fields within the community.

Funding/ Timing

Questions regarding sources of park funding and implementation schedules were very common. A limited land acquisition budget has been established by the County to acquire high-priority sites. The County must complete an EIR for the River Park before implementation of park improvements can occur.

Operations/ Maintenance/ Security

Many questions arose regarding the operation, maintenance, and security (patrolling) within the park. There is general concern regarding the existing homeless population within the river corridor and related public safety issues. The development of the River Park will activate this portion of the river corridor with desirable park uses and users, thereby rendering this area less desirable as a homeless refuge. Ranger patrols and coordination with law enforcement authorities would also improve actual and perceptual security within the River Park.

PUBLIC SURVEY

San Luis Rey River Park Master Plan County of San Diego Hargreaves Associates Planning Team



SURVEY

1. Which of the following potential park elements would you like to see included in the San Luis Rey River Park Master Plan? (check multiple, if needed)

- ☐ Biking trails
- ☐ Hiking trails
- ☐ Equestrian trails
- ☐ Soccer fields
- ☐ Baseball/ softball fields
- ☐ Indoor recreational facilities
- ☐ Golf course
- ☐ Tennis
- ☐ Model plane areas
- ☐ Play areas for kids
- ☐ Dog areas
- ☐ Picnic areas
- ☐ Habitat restoration
- ☐ Equestrian center
- ☐ Interpretive center (natural and cultural resources)
- ☐ Botanic/ native plant gardens
- ☐ Festival/ event areas
- ☐ Community gathering/ performance venue
- ☐ Bathrooms
- ☐ Other _____

2. How often do you think you will visit the San Luis Rey River Park once built?

- ☐ less than 1 time per month
- ☐ 1- 3 times per month
- ☐ 3-5 times per month
- ☐ 5-10 times per month
- ☐ 10 + times per month

3. How far would you travel to visit the park?

- ☐ 1-5 miles
- ☐ 5-15 miles
- ☐ 15+ miles

4. How would you get to the park?

- ☐ walk
- ☐ bike
- ☐ horse
- ☐ car

5. Please rank the following goals for the San Luis Rey River Park Master Plan (1 being the most important, 7 being the least important)

- ___ Preservation of habitat
- ___ Recreational fields
- ___ Protection of water quality
- ___ Safety
- ___ Trails
- ___ Preservation of rural character
- ___ Protection/ interpretation of cultural resources

6. What are your primary goals/ desires for the San Luis Rey River Park Master Plan?

7. Any other comments

To assist the Planning Team in evaluating the needs and desires of the community, surveys were distributed at each of the public meetings and to various focus groups. Surveys were also available on the County's website.

The survey asked respondents to identify desired park program elements, how often they would visit the park, from how far they would be travelling, and by what mode of transportation. Prioritization of goals and additional comments were also encouraged.

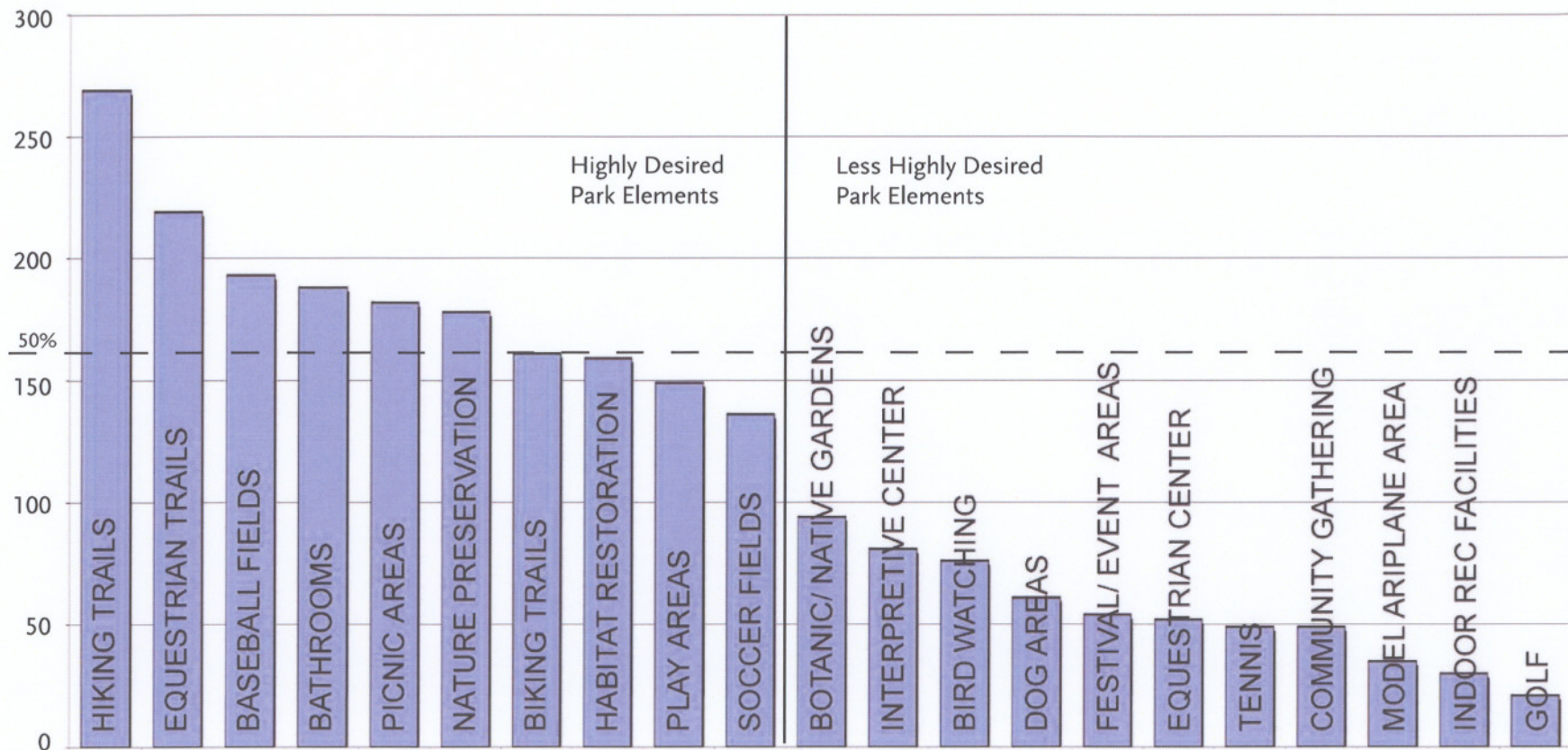
Survey

SURVEY RESULTS

Preferred Park Elements

Throughout the planning process, 329 surveys were completed and submitted to the County. The first survey question asked respondents to identify program elements or park facilities that they would like to have included within the SLR River Park. While trails were consistently

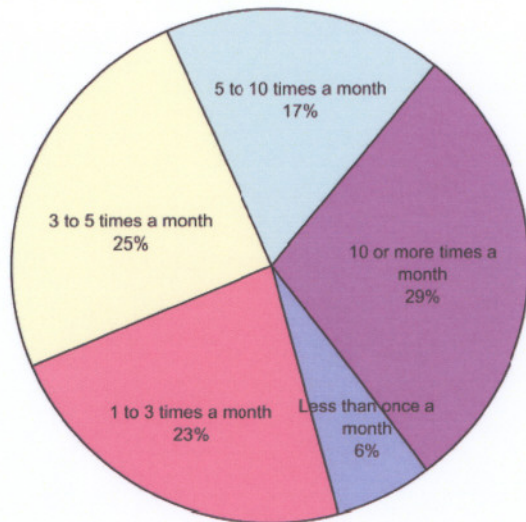
the most highly desired element, sports fields (baseball and soccer), nature preservation, and picnic areas were also very popular. There was a noticeable decrease in interest in park elements shown to the right of soccer fields on the diagram below.



Responses to Survey Question: Which of the following potential park elements would you like to see included in the San Luis Rey Park Master Plan?

Frequency of Anticipated River Park Visitation

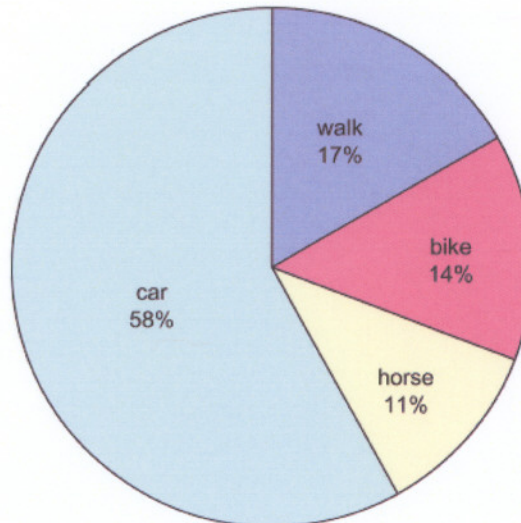
The largest portion of survey respondents thought that they would visit the River Park 10 or more times a month. This exceptionally high visitation rate indicates the potential high degree of use that the River Park will attract and accommodate.



Responses to Survey Question: How often do you think you will visit the River Park once built?

Anticipated Mode of Arrival to River Park

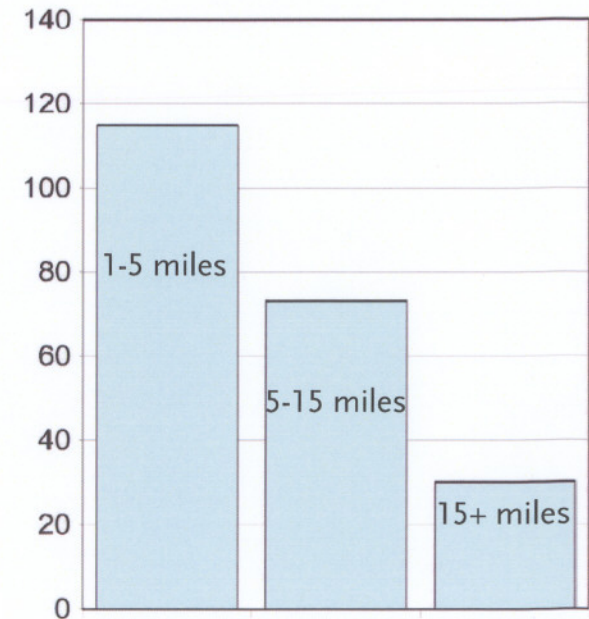
As anticipated, most respondents indicated that they would be driving to the River Park, though a large portion responded that they will be using other modes of transport, dispelling some concerns about increases in car related traffic. Still, the Master Plan provides adequate parking and staging areas to provide for this predominantly vehicular access. Pedestrian, equestrian, and bike access to the park will be provided on multi-use trails linking the park's amenities to adjacent communities.



Responses to Survey Question: How would you get to the park?

Travel Distance to Park

Roughly half of the survey respondents would be travelling 1-5 miles to visit the River Park, which may partially be explained by the fact that most of those attending public meetings (and filling out the surveys) live within immediate proximity of the CSA. Roughly one third of the individuals responded that they would be coming from 5-15 miles away.



Responses to Survey Question: How far would you travel to visit the park?

MPAG & FOCUS GROUPS

MPAG

Each member of the Master Plan Advisory Group (MPAG) was chosen as a representative of a community group whose interests relate to the issue involved with the development of San Luis Rey River Park. Some of those interests are: active recreation, the environment, water quality, trails and their users, children, cultural resources, and Bonsall and Fallbrook Community Planning Areas. As leaders of these community groups, the role of the MPAG member is to represent the views and interests of their constituents, give feedback to the Planning Team throughout the development the Master Plan, and keeping their constituents informed of the progress of the project.

Focus Groups

The Planning Team met with a series of focus groups in order to discuss and obtain input regarding major park planning issues and the needs/ desires of various constituent groups. These focus groups included representative community leaders and organizations with a stake in the future of the San Luis Rey River Park, bringing the voice of the larger public to bear on issues of site use, park programming, and impacts on adjacent communities. It is the cross pollination of ideas and an understanding of each group's respective needs and constraints that leads towards a mutual understanding of issues and divergent perspectives.

We would like to thank the following organizations and individuals who contributed to this process:

The Audubon Society
Backcountry Horsemen
Bonsall Chamber of Commerce
Bonsall Union School District
Bonsall Sponsor Group
Bonsall- Fallbrook Little League
California Dept of Fish and Game
California Parks and Recreation
Society (Dist. XII)
Caltrans
Fallbrook Avocado Soccer League
Fallbrook Land Conservancy
Fallbrook Planning Group
Fallbrook Revitalization Committee
Fallbrook Youth Soccer
Historic Resources
The Nature Conservancy
Rainbow Water District
San Diego County Water Authority
Rincon San Luiseño Band of Mission
Indians
San Diego County Trails Council
San Diego Mountain Biking Association
San Diego Parks Advisory Committee
San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians
San Luis Rey Watershed Council
Sierra Club
US Dept of Fish and Wildlife
Vista Palomar Riders

TRAILS FOCUS GROUP

A continuous year-round trail system providing access to the River Park's various natural environments, and recreational amenities is the highest priority for park-adjacent communities. A survey of community members showed widespread interest in hiking, equestrian and biking trails within the park. At the trails focus group meeting, there was a consensus that hikers, bikers, bird watchers, and equestrians can share the same multi-use trails, although some community members at the public meetings disagreed. Shared, multi-use, trails have proven to be successful in other regional parks in San Diego County and throughout the country.

Although most trails within the River Park will be multi-use, consistent with the County Trails Master Plan, it is recommended that a few pedestrian-only loops be included to provide opportunities to experience more sensitive habitat areas and accommodate smaller/ shorter walking loops or focused passive activities such as bird watching. It should be noted that portions of the multi-use trail may be closed seasonally to avoid indirect impacts to sensitive species. Many trail users would be comfortable with relatively narrow trails, which is consistent with the County Trails Master Plan, which states the trails could be as narrow as 3'-4' in width, depending on the sensitivity of the vegetation in the area. Motorized vehicles will not be allowed on the park trails, as they are inconsistent with the sensitivity of the habitat

(damaging/ disturbing habitat areas and accelerating erosion) and overall park goals.

Circulation

Trails focus group participants felt that a minimum of three access points to the trail system (one at either end and one in the middle) would be sufficient to provide access to the River Park's trail network. It is desirable to consolidate parking/ staging areas with recreational amenities, to eliminate redundancy in services and utilities. These areas could offer parking, staging for trailers, bathrooms, potable water, and picnic tables.

It is preferable to create trail loops with various round-trip lengths and defined by various park experiences. Bird watchers prefer short loops with numerous vantage points set away from the main trails, particularly away from bikers. Longer, continuous loops should be created for hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers. A paved bike path along SR-76 will provide opportunities for high-speed bike circulation. The deep sand within much of the riparian zone is difficult for both equestrians and bicyclists, so it is preferable to construct multi-use trails with a stable (non-paved) surface.

Trail bridges over the floodway, allowing continuous year-round use of trails within the floodplain, would be a significant asset to the park. Trail underpasses that can accommodate equestrians under SR-76 would be useful

in connecting riparian trails with upland trails to the north.

EQUESTRIAN FOCUS GROUP

Trail Design and Amenities

Equestrian focus group participants requested that multi-use trails be separated from sports fields or other highly-active recreational areas in order to keep the horses from getting spooked by crowds and noise. Trails can be within sight of the fields, but there should be a buffer between them, possibly of trees or other vegetation. Although participants thought multi-use trails were acceptable, they noted a need to educate trail users regarding appropriate trail-sharing behavior.

In general, equestrians prefer trails that meander and that are not too wide. Trail bridges would provide for year-round circulation throughout the park's riparian zone and connect park amenities on both sides of the river. In particular, a new crossing near Little Gopher Canyon Road is desired where the Vista Palomar Riders Equestrian Club is located. Amenities such as bird watching platforms may also be incorporated along the trail system.

Staging Areas

Two to four horse trailer parking/ staging areas are needed to provide access to the trails, with additional parking/ staging areas to provide access to upland areas. These staging areas would preferably be located at either end and in the middle of the CSA. It would be preferable to have these staging areas large enough to allow trailers to drive through continuously (as opposed to backing up and turning around).



Local Equestrian

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES FOCUS GROUP

Habitat preservation/ restoration and the future integrity of the San Luis Rey River were top priorities for the environmental groups that participated in the environmental issues focus group. For groups whose constituents include hikers and bird watchers and nature enthusiasts, well-planned access to sensitive habitat areas area is not only positive, but necessary. It is only through exposure to natural resources that advocacy for resource protection is engendered. Trail connections between the SLR riparian zone, adjacent canyons, and upland areas will provide diverse experiences for park visitors, thereby enhancing their understanding and appreciation of the river corridor's resources.

The interface between multi-use trails and habitat preservation areas must be carefully planned. Because bike use may disturb birds, some bird-watching trails may prohibit bike use. Hikers and equestrians are not thought to cause the same level of habitat disruption, and can use trails that pass through sensitive habitat areas. Interpretive signage and vantage points overlooking the river corridor would also be positive amenities.

The impact of trail and park development on the floodplain and riparian zone should be carefully considered. It was also generally agreed that water quality should be considered when developing the River Park. Trail bridges would help improve the water quality of the river by reducing contamination from horse manure and the spread of non-native seeds.

For regional habitat preservation to be successful, it is important to establish connections to proximate wildlife corridors, allowing broader regional species movements and access to a wider range of habitat.



Existing Riparian Habitat

ACTIVE RECREATION FOCUS GROUP

There is a general deficit of public active recreation/sports fields in the North County region. The MPAG representative from the California Parks and Recreation Society noted that the need for active recreation has grown significantly over the past 15 years, with increased interest in sports such as soccer, lacrosse, and field hockey. The active recreation focus group participants explained that existing fields in the area are over-used and degraded, and although Oceanside and Temecula have fields, they are also very crowded. Leagues such as Girls Softball have been forced to eliminate their programs, while other teams have to travel significant distances to play their games, due to lack of available home fields.

Soccer fields are needed for both children and adults. There are several soccer programs in the area, including 700-800 children in Fallbrook Youth Soccer. Some of the local fields in the area are over-used resulting in less than ideal conditions. Rainbow Park is a successful local example of a 6-acre park that has overlapping soccer and baseball fields; it is effective and very well used.

A representative from the Bonsall- Fallbrook Little League expressed a need for two or three full size fields for their program and one smaller field for younger children. Any additional fields might allow for the softball program to be reinstated.

There are a few public basketball and tennis courts in the Fallbrook and Bonsall area, possibly satisfying the community's needs for these facilities. Further study will need to be done to determine whether additional basketball and tennis courts should possibly be incorporated into the Master Plan.

Small skateboard parks exist in Vista and Pala, but these only partially satisfy the demand created by the 3000 students in the Fallbrook School System who have skateboards. A skateboard park could be incorporated into a larger family-oriented recreational node.



Soccer Field and Players



Softball Player



Soccer Players

CULTURAL RESOURCES FOCUS GROUP

Local Tribes, Sites, and Artifacts

The San Luis Rey River Corridor is rich in Native American Cultural Resources. Several Native American tribes reside on reservations up river from the CSA, including the Pala Band of Mission Indians. The people of the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians are living in the area as well as the Pala Mission Indians. Many cultural resources have already been identified within the CSA, though much of the land has not yet been surveyed. As potential park development sites are identified, detailed surveys will be necessary to ensure that sensitive sites and resources are adequately protected and preserved. Tribal grants may be available to help protect important artifacts and sites.

Interpretive Areas and Facilities

The cultural resources focus group felt that the establishment of an Interpretive Area and Facilities would be an effective way of preserving and presenting the multiple histories and cultures of the local tribes in a unified fashion. Tribes including the Rincon, Poway, Pala, Pechanga, Pauma, and Luiseño Tribes may be interested in becoming involved with interpretive programming and Native American cultural activities. Many tribes in the area have expressed interest in Interpretive Facilities that educate Native American youth and the public on tribal history, and have cultural committees that could guide each tribe's involvement in the project.

Interpretive Areas and Facilities could provide an opportunity for learning about tribal language, stories, music, crafts, and ethnobotany. Some of these cultural resources could be interpreted along the river trails. Although some of these sites are too sensitive to accommodate general access, other less-sensitive sites could include interpretive programming that educates park users regarding the rich cultural heritage of the area. Outdoor park spaces could accommodate cultural education, spiritual gatherings, basket weaving, and other community events. In particular, an area for public or tribal meetings of +/-100 would be well-used and appreciated. There are also overlapping interpretive opportunities to educate the public about river ecologies and the associated dynamic hydrologic system.



Native American arrowhead



Old Bonsall Bridge



Luiseño woven basket. credit: Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley, CA